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Lou Holtz offers wisdom at graduation

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

NCAA Hall of Fame coach Lou Holtz told a room of eighth-grade graduates Thursday night that he had a drug problem when he was younger.

He "was drug to mass" every Sunday and holy day and he was "drug out" behind the woodshed every time he lied.

Holtz gave the commencement address for the eighth grade graduation of St. Peter's Catholic School at St. Peter's Catholic Church, sharing his wit and wisdom with the youngsters, most of whom will be leaving the Catholic school fold next year for public education.

"The only people who will ever tell you 'you can't do something' are failures. It is important to care more than other people think is wise and it is important to expect more than other people think is possible."

Lou Holtz
NCAA Hall of Fame coach

Holtz's grandson, Louis Leo "Tre" Holtz III was among the 60 graduates of the ceremony.
Holtz's son, and Tre's father, Skip.

HOLTZ
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is the head coach of the East Carolina University football team.

The senior Holtz lead the Notre Dame Fighting Irish to a national championship in 1988 and is the only coach to take six different Division I teams to bowl games.

He has had three New York Times bestsellers.

"You are looking at the only guy in the world who has written more books than he has read," he joked.

Holtz has plenty of jokes for the audience, but he also gave the graduates some words of wisdom.

"I have been 14, you have never been 71," he told the graduates. "Have fun with whatever you do. If you have fun doing something, people will have fun watching you."

Holtz gave the graduates three simple rules for life:

- Do the right thing.
- Do everything to the best of your ability.
- Show people you care.

Those are the only rules he ever gave a football team, he said, adding that they are same the rules that helped get him where he is.

"The only people who will ever tell you 'you can't do something' are failures," he said. "It is important to care more than other people think is wise and it is important to expect more than other people think is possible."

He told the graduates to keep their faith as they leave Catholic school and attend different high schools. He said he remembers doing the same thing as a kid.

"It is important to have a dream," he said. "I don't know of anything that could happen without dreams."

Josh Humphries can be reached at jhumphries@coxnc.com and 329-9565.
Our Views

Halfway home

East Carolina fund drive marks progress

To commemorate East Carolina University's first 100 years — and to prepare for its future — the school embarked on a fundraising campaign to collect $200 million. This effort, called the Second Century Campaign, intends to help the school support students and draw faculty to improve its overall educational experience.

East Carolina officials announced this week that the school expects to reach the halfway mark of that fund drive this summer, a milestone achieved in a remarkably brief period. Further progress is needed, however, because East Carolina cannot afford to see a rare opportunity like the centennial pass without the successful completion of this campaign.

Since the arrival of Chancellor Steve Ballard in 2004, East Carolina has applied considerable effort to its fundraising. Like most institutions of higher education in the present landscape, the school's endowment needs to grow and the collection of money from alumni and supporters stands to help East Carolina meet the educational demands of the 21st century.

That effort emerged as the Second Century Campaign, planned to coincide with the three-year celebration of the 100th anniversary of the school's 1907 founding and 1909 admission of its first class. The first part of the fundraising drive, the private phase, generated $84 million of a $200 million total goal. The second public phase began in March with $91 million already collected.

Since then, East Carolina has raised another $6 million and is only $3 million shy of the halfway point. This is the first fundraising campaign the school has conducted in 15 years, and represents an important effort for the future. The money will be devoted to student needs, such as scholarships and financial aid, and to acquire faculty members who help cement East Carolina's status as a nationally recognized research institution.

The status report is encouraging for the East Carolina community, as it shows the school has proven successful in generating enthusiasm for its goal. Let's hope that trend continues, since meeting the $200 million target will mark an important milestone and a promising sum for the school's future hopes.
Vertical licenses proposed for youth

They are meant to curb alcohol sales

BY LYNN BONNER
STAFF WRITER

To keep from selling alcohol to underage buyers, North Carolina store clerks may have to start looking at driver’s licenses in a whole new way — vertically.

Under a proposal being considered by state legislators, drivers under 21 would get vertical licenses meant to be held longways. The goal is to make it easier for clerks to tell quickly when someone is under age.

Twenty-one other states have put this twist on driver’s licenses, and the N.C. Child Fatality Task Force, a legislative study commission, wants North Carolina to join them.

State driver’s licenses are now color-coded in a red-yellow-green system that signals to clerks when buyers are old enough to buy tobacco products (over 18).

Virginia is one state with vertical licenses.

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LICENSE

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and alcohol (over 21). Stores also have a variety of calendars, notices and cash register gadgets intended to prevent underage sales.

But vendors still sell to minors. In fact, state Alcohol Law Enforcement surveys have shown that more than half the clerks who check IDs from underage buyers still sell them alcohol.

Such statistics indicate “a problem with those vendors accurately reading the IDs,” said Selena Childs, the task force’s executive director. Turnover for cash register clerks is high, and some may not be on the job long enough to be trained or to get used to existing safeguards.

The task force proposes to keep the color code and to add verticallity. It would cost $50,000 for the necessary software changes to produce vertical licenses.

“Anything that we can do to cut back on underage sales, we’re for,” said William C. Chandler, division director of state ALE.

As in other states, trade associations and safety advocates seem to like the idea.

“It would be easier to card people,” said Gary Harris, executive director of the N.C. Petroleum and Convenience Marketers.

Rep. Dale Folwell, a Winston-Salem Republican and bill sponsor, said the DMV commissioner and Pediatric Society support the change. “Once a year, I work on a bill I hope will save lives, and this is that one,” Folwell said.

Some young adults aren’t sure vertical licenses would do much to reduce underage alcohol purchase.

LICENSE RESTRICTIONS

CURRENT

Red border — Under 18. Not allowed to buy tobacco products or alcohol.


Green border — 21 and over. Can buy any tobacco or alcohol products.

PROPOSED

Vertical license — For anyone under 21. Red and yellow colors would still signal whether tobacco could be bought.

Horizontal license — For anyone 21 and over.

ENFORCEMENT WOES

• Of the 4,695 checks of businesses that sell alcohol from Jan 1, 2006 through Tuesday, nearly 19 percent sold alcohol to buyers younger than 21.

• Of those who made the sale, nearly 52 percent had checked the buyer’s ID.

THE BILLS

House bill 2487 is in the House Transportation Committee and Senate bill 1891 is in the Senate Transportation Committee.

purchases, because it wouldn’t affect a much-used tool — the fake ID.

“Fake IDs are going to be horizontal,” said Alexander Leonard, a 21-year-old N.C. State University student. Thus, underage buyers would automatically look older by having a horizontal ID.

“The fact that the real ones are going to be vertical won’t make a difference, I don’t think.”

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UNC grant will help hasten medical research

BY JESSE JAMES DECONTO
STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL — It took doctors more than 12 years to figure out that Karen Le Clair’s cleft palate was harming her hearing.

Her parents had to find dentists, plastic surgeons and ear, nose and throat specialists all on their own, and the doctors didn’t talk to each other.

That was in Detroit in the 1950s and ‘60s. Twelve years ago, at age 48, Le Clair moved to Chapel Hill, to gain access to some of the best medical care in the nation.

After nearly a dozen surgeries in her lifetime, Le Clair knows the benefit of having teams of specialists within arm’s reach.

“When I was a kid, that wasn’t around,” she said.

Thanks to a $61 million grant announced Thursday by the National Institutes of Health, UNC-Chapel Hill will be working to make sure families across North Carolina can tap into that kind of care.

The money will support the UNC Translational and Clinical Sciences Institute, or TracS, which circulates medical knowledge among patients, doctors and researchers so that they all learn from one another.

“The initiative will bridge science and clinical practice and speed up the movement of innovations from the laboratory to the bedside and the community,” said Dr. William L. Roper, dean of the UNC School of Medicine.

The institute will partner with the university’s Area Health Education Centers to open community research units in Wake County, the Coastal Plain region and Wilmington, to complement a pilot program in Greensboro.

“If somebody wants to be part of a study, they don’t need to come to Chapel Hill,” said Dr. Giselle Corbie-Smith, director of community engagement for TracS.

The research units will collect clinical data and opinions from patients, transfer them to UNC-CH for researchers to analyze and test the latest treatments on patients who might benefit.

“I had tears in my eyes when I heard this was coming through,” said Le Clair, who serves on the TracS Community Advisory Board and works as a support specialist for disabled children with the Family Support Network of North Carolina.

The pilot program, the Greensboro Health Disparities Collaborative, is polling patients on whether doctors should prescribe treatment on the basis of genetic differences among the races in the wake of a controversial study showing that certain drugs worked differently in blacks and whites.

“We’re not going to impose research on a community, but we’re actually going to empower,” said Terence Muhammad, chairman of the Greensboro collaborative.

“The people that we’re going to serve, we want them to have a say in all this.”

The Respectful Prescribing Study in Greensboro is just an example of the give-and-take that will come with the NIH grant. Dr. Paul Watkins, a UNC medical professor who led the NIH grant application process, said an advisory board will decide which medical ailments will command the attention of the program.

“We will focus on the areas where we’re farthest along and most advanced,” Watkins said, adding that TracS will be dispersing current research not only from UNC but also from 38 other grantee institutions across the nation, including Duke University.

“UNC will lead the entire network in this type of activity of partnering with communities.”

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Audit faults UNCG official

No-bid contract was worth $431,925

BY JANE STANCILL
STAFF WRITER

A UNC-Greensboro vice chancellor inappropriately hired a technology contractor who was paid $431,925 in state money over two years, including $65,000 in expenses for commuting to Greensboro from Los Angeles and Las Vegas, according to a state audit released Thursday.

The payments included $212,000 in student fee revenue to the contractor, whose billing rate was raised from $150 to $200 an hour during the period. The contract was executed by the vice chancellor for information technology services without following university policies, the audit said.

The job, which was to ensure that a new administrative computing system was implemented on time, was not posted or competitively bid. In violation of university procedure, the university's top legal and business officials did not review the contract, according to the audit.

The vice chancellor who approved the contract was not named in the audit, nor was the independent contractor.

The investigative audit disclosed the contractor's excessive reimbursements for meals, including 22 meals over $50 and two purchases of alcoholic beverages, which is against state policy.

The amount paid to the contractor was 83 percent more than the equivalent hours of salary and benefits of a university employee who had comparable duties, the audit said.

"In our opinion, a more cost-effective solution could have been obtained," the audit said.

In a letter to State Auditor Les Merritt, UNCG Chancellor Patricia Sullivan took issue with the audit's findings. The contractor had valuable expertise not available among university staff, she wrote.

"We want to emphasize that no malfeasance or wrongdoing occurred and the outcomes were excellent," Sullivan's letter said. "Our own review of the facts, circumstances, and results achieved with regard to the contract expenditures at issue shows that the State received excellent value. UNCG hired the best contractor to help to manage a difficult, mission-critical, systems implementation."

Sullivan said the university would implement new procedures for outside contracts, ensuring proper review and competitive bidding for most projects.

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ORANGE COUNTY

UNC-CH will stick with its airport plan

CHAPEL HILL – UNC-Chapel Hill is proceeding with plans to close Horace Williams Airport despite a bill introduced last week to keep it open.

"Obviously the submission of this bill is of interest to us," Jack Evans, executive director of the planned research campus, said Thursday. "But for right now the course we're on is the implementation of the chancellor's plan that has been endorsed by the Board of Governors."

On Tuesday, state Sen. Tom Apodaca, a Hendersonville Republican, introduced a bill that would keep Horace Williams Airport open until a new airport is built and operating within 10 miles of the current airport off Estes Drive Extension in Chapel Hill.

Apodaca said the airport is important for patient safety. He called the university's plans a "land grab for Carolina to expand an office park."
Army suicides up 13 percent, hit a record in 2007

Long, repeated war tours blamed

BY PAULINE JELINEK
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - Army soldiers committed suicide in 2007 at the highest rate on record, and the toll is climbing ever higher this year as long war deployments stretch on.

At least 115 soldiers killed themselves last year, up from 102 the previous year, the Army said Thursday.

Nearly a third died at the battlefront - 32 in Iraq and four in Afghanistan. But 26 percent had never deployed to either conflict.

"We see a lot of things that are going on in the war which do contribute — mainly the long time and multiple deployments away from home, exposure to really terrifying and horrifying things, the easy availability of loaded weapons and a force that's very, very busy right now," said Col. Elspeth Ritchie, psychiatric consultant to the Army surgeon general.

"And so all of those together we think are part of what may contribute, especially if somebody's having difficulties already," she told a Pentagon news conference.

Some common factors among those who took their own lives were trouble with relationships, work problems and legal and financial difficulties, officials said.

More U.S. troops also died overall in hostilities in 2007 than in any of the previous years in Iraq and Afghanistan. Violence increased in Afghanistan with a Taliban resurgence, and U.S. deaths increased in Iraq even as violence there declined in the second half of the year.

Increasing the strain on the force was the extension of deployments to 15 months from 12 months, a practice ending this year.

The 115 confirmed suicides among active-duty soldiers and National Guard and Reserve troops who had been activated amounted to a rate of 18.8 per 100,000 troops — the highest since the Army began keeping records in 1980. Two other deaths are suspected suicides but still under investigation.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the suicide rate for U.S. society overall was about 11 per 100,000 in 2004, the latest year for which the agency has figures. The Army said that when civilian rates are adjusted to cover the same age and gender mix that exists in the Army, the civilian rate is more like 19.5 per 100,000.

So far this year, the trend is similar to last year, said Lt. Col. Thomas E. Langfurd, head of command policies and programs.

As of Monday, there had been 38 confirmed suicides in 2008 and 12 more deaths that are suspected suicides but still under investigation, he said.

The rate of suicide continues to rise despite a host of efforts the Army has made to improve the mental health of a force under unprecedented stress from the longer-than-expected war in Iraq and the long and repeated tours of duty it has prompted.

The efforts include more training and education programs for troops and their families. Officials also have hired more mental health workers, increased screening to measure the psychological health of soldiers and worked to reduce any stigma that keeps them from going for treatment when they have symptoms of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress and other emotional problems.